

Introduction

There's Nothing Better Than a Beautiful Birdscape!



On a nice, warm summer day, I'm happy as a clam puttering among my plants, listening to the birds sing their sweet songs. And since I've started gardening for

the birds, you wouldn't believe the sensational symphonies that greet my ears. It's Mother Nature's finest concert—and it's free when your yard does double duty as a bird sanctuary.

 The best part is that it's easy to transform an ordinary backyard into a top-notch birdscape. The secret lies in knowing which plants birds will flip over and how to combine those plants to make your fine-feathered friends feel right at home. So in this book, I've gathered my best tips on more than 200 terrific plants and 25 perfect planting combinations that are guaranteed to bring birdies flockin' to your yard.

 In Chapter 1, we'll look at the big picture of birdscaping and how to create the building blocks that supply

birds' basic needs for food, water, and shelter. You'll learn about birds' favorite food sources, including juicy bugs, ripe berries, protein-packed seeds, and sweet nectar. You'll also discover the best sources of shelter, nesting materials, and how birds use "corridors" of plantings to move safely about a yard.

 In Chapters 2 and 3, we explore the wide world of shrubs and berry plants that'll increase the bird-appeal of any home landscape. Nothing beats a simple cluster of shrubs as a place to duck for cover from predators. And if you add some berry bushes that offer up sweet treats for fruit lovers, you'll have a yard that bluebirds, cardinals, grosbeaks, mockingbirds, and a boatload of other beautiful birds just can't resist!

 Chapter 4 is fun because the subject is flowers. The secret to a great yard is to select flowers that provide food for your feathered friends. You'll learn which flowers attract insects for birds to feast on and which blooms will get the local hummingbirds buzzin' with joy. And top seed-producers like black-eyed Susans, cosmos, and zinnias round out the roster of great flowers for seed-loving birds.

 Naturally, trees and evergreens are an all-important part of any successful backyard birdscape. They may take years to get established, but they are the best places for birds to find shelter. And, the branches provide choice locations for everyone from tiny kinglets to stately owls to raise their families. So in Chapters 5 and 6, I'll help you sort through the list—from birches and oaks through hemlocks and spruces—so you can decide which ones are just right for your yard.

 Chapter 7 is a mouthwatering treat for both you and your fine-feathered friends because it's all about ripe, juicy fruit like apples, cherries, plums, and more. You'll learn how to plant and grow enough of these delights to satisfy both you and your favorite fruit-eaters, including orioles, warblers, and many others.

 In Chapters 8 and 9, we'll explore the twining world of vines and groundcovers, which provide important shelter and nesting niches for birds. Sure, honeysuckle, Virginia creeper, and pachysandra make great hummingbird vines, but I'll introduce you to several others, like trumpet creeper and red morning glory. You'll also see why bird-pleasing groundcovers are good choices for a backyard bird garden.

 And since we've covered just about every kind of plant imaginable, it's on to Chapter 10, where you'll discover how to create birdseed gardens that'll attract and feed just as many birds as any

off-the-shelf bird feeder ever could—if not more! Plus, we'll delve into how to collect and dry seeds from homegrown sunflowers, millet, and other bird favorites. These super seeds are a perfect supplement to your store-bought bird food.

 Once all of the planting is done, it's time to kick back and enjoy the birds nibbling on the seeds at your feeder. In Chapter 11, I've gathered the best ideas I could find for setting up and stocking a bird-feeding station—without costing you an arm and a leg.

 Finally, when it comes to the great outdoors, a picture can be worth a thousand words. So I've finished this book with pictures of 62 of the best bird-pleasing plants on the planet. You'll find a gorgeous, full-color photo of each featured plant, plus a generous helping of photos of the birds these plants attract so you can see who's who among the winged wonders that visit your birdscape.

 Throughout this book, you'll find tips, tricks, and tales about the best-loved backyard birds, from cheerful chickadees and jabbering jays to high-powered hummingbirds and beautiful Baltimore orioles. And since I'm a penny-pincher from way back, I've tucked in lots of helpful hints and homemade tonics using household items like panty hose, milk jugs, and coffee, to name a few. They'll save you time, money, and effort as you're tending to your beautiful backyard birdscape the fast, fun, and easy Jerry Baker way.